

## Burial

Burial is a common method of handling dead animals. This method involves excavating a grave or pit, filling the bulk of the excavation with dead animals, and then covering them with soil until the grave or pit is filled. The fill over the dead animals should be heaped to allow for settling. In time, the carcasses will decompose. In cold climates, burial is difficult when the ground is frozen.

At some locations, regulations may allow disposal by burial only for a massive die-off. For this reason, it is important to contact the appropriate regulatory agency for assistance and/or guidelines if this method is under consideration for day-to-day mortality. Where regulations allow burial, there are generally strict siting requirements. Common siting requirements include locating the burial

- Where it will not create an actual or potential public health hazard.
- In soils having a moderate to slow permeability.
- Where there is a specified minimum separation distance from wells and surface water bodies.
- Where there is no evidence of a seasonal high-water table above the bottom of the grave/pit.
- Outside the 100-year floodplain.

Sites that have permeable soils, fractured or cavernous bedrock, and a seasonal high-water table must be avoided.

Construction requirements for burial graves or pits limit the depth to less than 8 feet and demand that the sides of the excavation be sloped to a stable angle. If burial is used, it is important to protect the site from scavengers and rodents before and after burial. For poultry, a 12-inch compacted soil cover is considered minimum with 24 inches being the recommended depth. For larger animals, the cover depth should be at least 36 inches of compacted soil. The completed burial should be seeded with grass to prevent erosion. Check with local officials for specific regulations.

In summary, the burial method of managing mortality has the following advantages and disadvantages (Table 51-9).

**Table 51-9. Mortality management using burial.**

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Capital limited to land and excavating equipment	1. Nutrients contained in the dead animals are wasted.
	2. Increases sanitary precautions to prevent disease transmission.
	3. Storage of carcasses until burial may be necessary. Difficult if ground is frozen
	4. Land area becomes significant for large operations
	5. Impossible when ground is frozen

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